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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/MUSLIM OUTREACH: MISSION SUCCESS
STORIES

REF: A. A. THE HAGUE 3128 (2005)

[1](#)B. B. THE HAGUE 2870 (2005)

[1](#)C. C. THE HAGUE 3331 (2005)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In August 2005, Post established an Integration Issues Working Group (IIWG) to coordinate outreach and reporting activities related to the Dutch Muslim community. This approach succeeded in considerably expanding Embassy The Hague's and Consul General Amsterdam's contacts in the Dutch Muslim community as well as among government, academic, and think-tank circles. Mission has also significantly increased reporting on Dutch Muslim-related issues. This cable summarizes highlights from the last six months and describes new opportunities for further mission outreach. END SUMMARY.

TOP MISSION PRIORITY

[1](#)2. (SBU) In accordance with Washington guidance, mission has made engaging with the Dutch Muslim community a top priority, as reflected in the just-completed FY 2008 MPP. Mission efforts are focused around three prime objectives:

- Improving the image of the United States and U.S. policies among the increasingly influential -- and largely anti-American -- Dutch Muslim community;
- Increasing our understanding of issues of concern to the Dutch Muslim community and similar communities elsewhere in Europe, including relations with the non-Muslim majority;
- Using the U.S. experience to help foster a productive, non-confrontational dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim Dutch on sensitive issues of integration and civil rights.

COORDINATED APPROACH

[1](#)3. (SBU) Since August 2005, Mission activities in pursuit of the above goals have been coordinated through biweekly meetings of the Integration Issues Working Group (IIWG). The Working Group reports to the Charge d'Affaires, is chaired by POLCOUNS, and includes representatives from PD, POL, ECON, FCS, Global, RSO and CG Amsterdam. The Working Group approach has significantly enhanced the quality and quantity of mission reporting and outreach by encouraging sections to share resources, contacts, and experiences while promoting creative cross-section initiatives.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Under the direction of the IIWG, mission elements have taken a number of practical steps to facilitate coordination, including:

- the creation of a mission-wide calendar of current and upcoming events related to the Muslim community;

- increased access to the mission's contact data base, and the creation of specific lists of Muslim and Muslim-related contacts to which all elements can add names;
- production of a power-point presentation on the Muslim Community in the Netherlands, which is regularly updated and to which all sections have access.

¶5. (SBU) Mission has also benefited from the services of two long-term TDY personnel (one Presidential Management Intern followed by a three-month TDY from S/CT) devoted full time to Muslim community issues. In addition to their own impressive outreach and reporting efforts, these individuals provided critical communication and coordination support between mission elements, and served as a useful first point of contact and liaison between the mission and the Dutch Muslim community. Post has proposed in the current MPP establishing a new IROG position to continue these functions on a more permanent and ultimately less expensive basis.

REPORTING

¶6. (SBU) The heightened focus on Muslim issues is reflected in mission reporting. In the last six months, Embassy The Hague and ConGen Amsterdam have produced 27 cables related to Muslim community issues. Of these, only two - The Hague 2651 (2005) and The Hague 2705 (2005), both dealing with Islamic Extremism -- responded directly to Washington taskings. The rest, beginning with a broad overview of the Dutch Muslim community (The Hague 2599 (2005)) were either generated by post outreach initiatives or responded to specific developments such as the recent controversy over the Danish cartoons (The Hague 257, 303, 314, and 357). Other subjects THE HAGUE 00000374 002 OF 003

covered in post reporting include:

- Dutch legislative efforts to combat radicalism (The Hague 2648, 2793, and 2850 (2005));
- Profiles of prominent Muslims and Muslim organizations (Amsterdam 720 (2005), The Hague 3277, 3340 (2005) and 308);
- Social/Economic/Political aspects of the integration debate (The Hague 3008, 3064, 3069, 3381 (2005), 141, 149);
- Mission outreach initiatives (The Hague 2587, 3084, 3087, 3128, 3331 (2005), 228).

¶7. (SBU) Muslim community issues are also prominently featured in the daily press summary produced by the Public Diplomacy section, the Political Section's daily Politics in the Netherlands e-mail, and the Global Section's weekly e-mail summary of issues. In addition, the Information Research Center (IRC) has begun to circulate two new products via e-mail:

- Integration Issues Working Group Alert: a bi-weekly summary of recently published articles in the Dutch and international press, with links; and
- Dutch Integration Issues Review: a bi-weekly compilation of Muslim Community-related stories from the three products mentioned above.

(Note: Recipients of this cable who wish to be added to the circulation lists for the above products should e-mail their requests to ircethehague@state.gov. All products will also shortly be available at post's SIPRNET site:

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/thehague/>.)

OUTREACH

¶8. (SBU) At the direction of the front office, all mission elements have made reaching out to the Dutch Muslim community a top priority and have worked to incorporate outreach goals into their usual routines. For example, sections have been encouraged to add Dutch Muslim guests to receptions and other events whenever possible. Where appropriate, officials visitors have been encouraged to visit Muslim neighborhoods and make contact with Dutch Muslim contacts directly. Post has also taken full advantage of Fulbright grants, IVPs, and other exchange programs to identify and develop contacts in the Dutch Muslim community. For example, 5 out of 15 IVPs in FY 2006 were awarded to Dutch Muslim contacts, and the number

of Fulbright grant applications with non-Dutch last named -- a largely Muslim subset -- rose to 27 during the early application cycle in September 2005, with one selected; during the previous application cycle, 0 such applications were received. Post has programmed two American speakers with a focus on the Muslim community, and has used occasions such as Martin Luther King's Birthday and Black History Month to schedule events with a civil-rights focus of interest to Dutch Muslims.

¶9. (SBU) Mission has worked with local Muslim organizations such as Forum and MEX-it to identify opportunities for person-to-person contact. During the month of Ramadan, for example, Embassy the Hague and ConGen Amsterdam actively participated in a series of events organized by MEX-it, including 19 Iftar dinners hosted by local Muslim families (ref a). In November, ConGen Amsterdam hosted an inter-faith Thanksgiving service in Amsterdam and invited a local Imam.

¶10. (SBU) Starting in January, 2006, Charge has hosted a series of themed lunches with 8 - 10 guests on issues relevant to the Muslim community, which have further expanded mission contacts as well as reporting opportunities. Subjects covered to date include:

- Islamic Education in the Netherlands;
- Business/Commercial/Economic Opportunities for Dutch Muslims;
- Immigrant Participation in Politics;
- Dutch Muslim Media Representatives (2 lunches);

Future lunches are planned on themes including:

- Dutch-Muslim Literary/Cultural Life;
- Outreach to Muslims in Dutch Foreign Policy;
- Muslim Women in the Netherlands;
- Imam-training Programs in the Netherlands

¶11. (SBU) Since August, mission's list of Muslim and Muslim-related contacts has increased from 50 to 131 -- and THE HAGUE 00000374 003 OF 003

is still growing. Mission personnel have participated in over 85 events since August -- conferences, individual meetings, speaker programs, etc. -- with a primary focus on the Dutch Muslim community. Post recently initiated contact with the largest Muslim high-school in the country, in Rotterdam, and is exploring ways to expand this relationship -- for example, by inviting students to visit a U.S. Navy ship scheduled to call at Rotterdam in March.

¶12. (SBU) FCS is applying service and outreach programs to inform Muslim and other Dutch minority audiences about business opportunities here and in the U.S. For example, FCS and ECON have facilitated contact between the American Chamber of Commerce and local Turkish and Moroccan chambers, and is working to schedule a job fair in conjunction with a major U.S. placement company to assist minority youth seeking employment. FCS has also established strong contacts with a local organization for minority businesswomen.

SUCCESS STORIES

¶13. (SBU) While there has been steady progress over the past six months in improving mission's outreach and reporting efforts, several cases stand out as clear indicators of success. These include:

- Amsterdam West: As reported ref c, intensive outreach to this predominantly Muslim neighborhood in Amsterdam -- home to Mohammed Bouyeri, the confessed murderer of Theo van Gogh -- has resulted in a remarkably positive relationship between local community leaders and mission personnel.
- Iftar Dinner: The Iftar dinner hosted by Charge (ref b) was video-taped and broadcast on a local cable station catering to the Dutch-Moroccan community in Amsterdam. Muslim and non-Muslim contacts continue to cite this event as a highlight of the Ramadan season; other Embassies (including from predominantly Muslim countries) have subsequently declared their intention to host similar events next year.
- IVP Recipients: Mission has had great success in identifying up-and-coming Dutch Muslim community figures for

IVP programs. A prime example is Hany Abu-Assad, a Dutch-Palestinian film director whose film, Paradise Now was just nominated for an Oscar for best foreign language film. Prominent nominees this year include:

-- Amsterdam Alderman Ahmad Abutaleb, widely considered the most popular Muslim politician in the country will be an IVP participant in summer of 2006;

-- Nor-Eddine Ghoudani, chief Editor of Mzine Magazine, was selected for the Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists for April, 2006;

-- Two Muslim women members of parliament -- Fadime Orgu and Khadija Arib -- will participate in IV programs this spring/summer.

- Most Popular Muslims: In January, 2006, a local website (www.blijvenhier.nl) published the results of a poll to identify the most popular Muslims in the country. Of the 24 individuals named, Post was proud to note that 14 were current mission contacts -- and we are working on the rest.

NEXT STEPS:

¶14. (SBU) Post plans to take advantage of the arrival of a new Ambassador in early March to advance our outreach and reporting activities. The IIWG is currently scheduling events for Ambassador-designate and Mrs. Arnall which will bring them in contact with prominent members of the Dutch Muslim community. Post is also working with the U.S. Navy to use an upcoming ship visit to Rotterdam to expand contact with the local Muslim community, hopefully scheduling a community service project with a local school. In addition, FCS and the local American Chamber of Commerce are jointly developing a proposal to provide internships and job training with American companies (and the U.S. mission) for qualified minority/Muslim students. Post is also in contact with Embassy Brussels to explore possibilities for bringing American and Dutch Muslim community leaders together along the lines of the very successful conference held in Brussels in November 2005.

BLAKEMAN